

Bard

Bard College
Bard Digital Commons

Robert Kelly Manuscripts

Robert Kelly Archive

9-2019

sep2 2019

Robert Kelly

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts

Bard

= = = = =

I'm doing it the old way
green glass
broken in the alley way
chalk on the sidewalk
whispers even
between the pussywillow
and the rose

all the spaces that have
words in them you know
or think you do—

what shall we do with meaning
when the words are enough,
the sound of hem alone
like the horns in Bruckner

sound, the sound of them,
who needs more?

8 September 2019

= = = = =

One word at a rime
you have to be now
all the time, it's you

it's you who have to
string them all together
not one of them makes sense.—

this is called reading,
building the house of meaning,
chambers of guesswork
sly guests in curious costumes
only you will ever see.

8 September 2019

= = = = =

I meant to show you the way
but the pebbles fell from my hand
until I had only shadows
to give you--would they serve?

*I hit a stone with a stone
until it sang—*

follow the sound of it.
Go there bravely,
I'll come after and meet you
as soon as I'm born.

8 September 2019

SUMMA THEOLOGIAE

**Faith is gone
Hope is no longer a virtue
Charity is all that's left to us,
the only virtue
but charity is enough--
hurt no one, help everyone,
eight billion room-mates on a desert isle.**

8 September 2019

TO THE PARENTS

Waltz in the elevator
jog on the sea
we'll make a homeland
for everyone but me

smile for the papers
frown at the moon
your children are hungry
just give them a spoon

Give them an empty tune, some shiny thing
they can lick at least before food is invented,
the taste of metal stifles their cries before you
give them food, if you ever find it. f

Invention means discovery. Remember how it
tasted when you were young, and you had a
first taste of something that made sense? Why
do you deprive your children of that sudden
miracle?

You are nervous and afraid, I don't blame you for that, but in your anxiety you set a price on everything, and sell pleasures to your children that keep them hungry, and keep them from finding pleasures of their own.

I beg you, I see them all the time, intelligent, eager, hungry for what you have told them they want, sold them. I watch the sad eyes of their satisfaction.

8 September 2019

ANTHEM

1.

We had to go and get
born in America,
we wanted the deer,
possums, peccaries,
the brpoken calendar
of stars littering the desert.
We craved granite,
long rivers. But the why
of the matter.
eludes. Patriotism
racism war. But I think
there is a tenderness
to be found, someday,
somehow, hinted
by the autumn rose
of Sharon, shadow
of a shaggymaple tree.

2.

Trying to figure,
to find out.

Where
could we go,
there is no
place that is not here.

3.

Colorado wapiti
at eleven thousand feet
grazing patches
of grass around the ice.
Don't get too close
or you might see
yourself in their faces—
we are they
ourselves, bent
low to feed.

4.

I had some poride
I left it home
the better to find
music, make it
even, fingers
on the drum head
barely moving—
the touch of leather
reminds us: *I*
was skin once too.

And there is a funeral
in everything we eat.

5.

So stand there onstead,
fingers tapping on the shiny
hood of your nice car.
Just stand, just play,
don't get in, don't drive
away. Right here
is where the battle is,
so quiet you care barely
think it. But you do.

9 September 2019

THIS

**If this
makes anyone
happy
I am
complete.**

9 September 2019

= = = = =

The feeling of sunlight
creeping over the skin
or as if you could feel
inside you clean water
circling in the sink
or as if you heard
music from a passing car
but there is no road
by where = = = = =

The feeling of sunlight
creeping over the skin
or as if you could feel
inside you clean water
circling in the sink
or as if you heard
music from a passing car
but there is no road
by where you live.

9 September 2019

= = = = =

**Sweater weather
swelter after
later in the endless
conversation.**

9 September 2019

= = = = =

Out of green sleep an answer thrums,
we know the pattern from the stars
the drumbeat just repeats.
Wake, look round. Trees,
mostly trees, And in the middle distance
cars going past. fast.
You knew all this while you were still asleep.

2.

But a hand reaches out
and touches your knee.
It is your own. See
how mysterious sleep is,
all images and no way home.

3,

I gave you trees now give me gaiety
the glad of going and of coming back,
Hecate's daring dancers on Hera's lawn,
she looks three ways at once
and right at you,

watch her women aance,
their moves are words,
the weave of sense from tree to tree--
I told you to wake up
but now it is almost too late.

4.

Because when you have seen them dance
it changes everything.
You want to reach out and touch them at least,
but that of all things is wrong.
The Dream Deciders told you that
long ago but you forgot.
Now say your Mass and wipe your lips
and thank the trees for telling you all this.

9 September 2019

= = = = =

What I learned from the Painter:

**portraits are infamous
(though she didnt say so)
whether life-like or otherwise--
the face you look at
(I understood her to mean)
is out there
but the real space and time
of painting is in here,
the inner workshop from
whichall form and color flood
out into the seen word,
the home of all of us.
A true panting says
its own space outolud.**

9 September 2019

FRUITS OF THE EARTH

Chestnuts and the old man
who sold them on the street
in Paris, late winter light
snow. Or cherries eaten
from a paper bag along
the interesting bleak streets
round Clignancourt. Or apples
half-rotten nibbled by deer
right here, Montgomery Place,
Cedar Hill, America. Or once
a kiwi peeled in Oakland,
nibbled sweet green newly
imported from somewhere,
somewhere south of anywhere.
Or the mango left halfpeaten
by Miriam Herzl on a subway bench
dark dark wood uptown, no
matter when, I taste it still.

9 September 2019

HURRY-MAN AND MANJ

Hurry-Man and Manj elope
after they have filled
all the huge raw red earth
fields with seeds.

What kind?

All kinds,
they carry them in canvas sacks
slung on their back
and when the bags are empty
they run away.

2.

Weeks later
they come back
for tea.

To see what generosity has done.
They see the fields now
all green and greedy
with all kinds of everything
reaching for the sky,

flowers and thistles
grains and goblin trees
already shaking branchlets
at the timid sky
and good old roses and buckwheat too
and sweet French lavender
to make all our clothes smell good.

Manj turns to him and says
A successful marriage
wouldn't you say? He smiles
and she revs up the cart
and they drive away,
right through all the grasses,
grasses, greens, dodging the palms
already fanning the late summer air,
yes, everything grows!

3.

Manj told me this
when I met her once
she still goes barefoot,
loves the way her slender feet
look in the red earth,

in fact the red earth draws her
like a music she hears over the hill,
the smell of it, the tumbled
fresh-turned furrows of it
luring her body and mind,
in fact I met her one day
as i walked along the rim
and she told me then
all that I have told.

10 September 2019

*(Hurry-Man and Manj eloipe: yjose were the
dreamt words that woke me, most of the first
two parts dictated in dream; the ;latter sections
of Part 2 and all of 3 werejust composed. right
after I got up.)*

= = = = =

Is it enough
to wait for the obvious,
good weather, love letters,
found money, sweeter dreams?
Some of us are still
waiting for mommy to come home.

Isn't there some way
to *energize waiting*
so the wait itself
becomes the instrument
of its own accomplishment?
Isn't there a way
of breathing or holding your breath
or thinking certain thoughts
or folding your fingers
into certain geometric figures
to hurry the hour
when you hear footsteps,
the knob squeaking,
the door opening at last?

10 September 2019

= = = = =

**When the sun came
we were born
or did we come with her
over the hill we call Night?**

**But night always has a day
before it. doesn't it?
Where were we then
before the sun carried us here?**

**10 September 2019
Rhinebeck**

= = = = =

A male child
is called a Son
to remind him always
of his mother,
the sun in the house,
the sun in sht sky.

10.IX.19, Rhinebeck

= = = = =

Things nearby
buzzsaw in the meadow
where the cars park
for the hospital.
We engrave ourselves
on the local earth
but in or dreams
there is always a mountain
pure of our presence.
virgin granite, severe
sermon, teaching even us
the silence in the heart of love.

10 September 2019
Rhinebeck

= = = = =

*

**Recite the names
of all the gods you know,
in order, Athena, Brigid,
Calliope, Demeter, Eanna,
Freya, on and on, let
Ganesh in, and Hecate, Isis.
all thro,ugh the alephbeth
and then come back for more.
Say the names, they ripen
in your lips, *a god comes*
when you say her name, his name.
By Zeus I swear that this is true.**

**10 September 2019
Rhinebeck**

= = = = =

But what did I fear?
The train hooting up the track
far away. Albany?
When will I be born?

Amd when will *again*
ever end? Ice
is still months away
but there are mounains

still. Even the sea
did not help me sleep
or woke me by being gone.

(But where could the sea go?)
And I can't tell the difference,
I'm still mot even born.

11 September 2019

= = = = =

Thus one supposes
the waves to be
mermaid voices—

do they lure, or lull?
*They tell a story we have heard before,
and like all good children we love to listen.*

11 September 2019

= = = = =

Wait for the window
to open the sky—

tell me something
I have never heard

a new kind of tree
or bird, a whisper

made only out of light.

11 September 2019

= = = = =

**A delight
to talk the gods
into their places.
back in the noumenal
firmament again
after all these stupid
skeptical years**

**and now their individual
very particular lights
can shine out in us
down on the daily practice of being,
our blessedly endless task.**

**I shout their names,
some of them, and whisper others,
and stand with my hands outstretched
top welcome their touch.**

11 September 2019

= = = = =

Waiting
 comes to mind
so many days
at waking,
 as if to wait
was the business of the day.

2.
Waiting for wind.
Waiting for the window
 to let the air in,
air is melody
 waiting for the song.

3.
Or for the door
to open and they
come in, the ones
you always wait for.
Or you go out at last.

12 September 2019

= = = = =

1.

Obvious

is another word
that wakes me
or I wake with
the obvious things—
I suppose the word
meant lying right there
in front of us
on our path,
maybe even blocking the road
to something else.
But that's not obvious.

2.

The word came again this morning—
“waiting for the obvious”
it said that already
I wrote it down months ago
but it comes again,
does it have a dark meaning,

sickbeds and coffin,
or a bright,
springtime and all
the breakfasts to come?
The obvious is not obvious enough.

3.
I'll settle on brightness
and unlock the door,
open the window,
inhale the wind—
what comes to you
is meant for you —
that much is obvious.

12 September 2019

= = = = =

He looked at his pen and thought
Enough ink left for a sonnet
but the words are too few—
all he could think was *you*.

12 September 2019

= = = = =

Uranus,
 one of his years
is 84 of ours. Mine.
My birthday,
 he looms
out of the shadow we call light.

2.
Do the stars come round
to relieve us?
 deceive us
into being?
 being where
we think we are?

[dreamt]

12 September 2019

= = = = =

**As a poet
I think I am the dancer
not the choreographer.**

*

**Nothing to wait for
it's all now.**

12 September 2019

= = = = =

**This glass plate
reflects and refracts—
what about you?**

**Are you as single-
minded as sunlight or
does chance play a part**

**in this opera called you?
I never knew till now
that glass could speak—**

sing, yes, but these are words.

13 September 2019

= = = = =

New Bedford. 5:50

Les mouettes! The cries,
squabbling high
frequency shapes over us
on the pier, the gulls,
gulls!

I love them,
love the snarl of the gangplank
being hauled in,
shudder of the vessel,
the whole ancient
ritual of beginning,
each time
in all this history
the doing of it,
to enter on the sea!

2.

This holy place—
shouldn't we be afraid
to drag our craft

into such primal waters,
the one condition
beyond life is __,
the life we knew,
 my life,
my sea.

13 September 2019

= = = = =

**Or: a man walking into the sea,
a man daring to use words—
not just crying out bird!
lion! rain!
but stringing them together,
connecting, cohering,
a complete sentence is like the sea.**

13 September 2019

ON BUZZARD'S BAY

1.

The *skin*

or is it weaving
the long leaves of water,
sea-lift, heaven-hurled?

No such words.

And yet,
and yet.

2.

There is a voice in these things,
noises in the garage,
hot spells,
sea gulls—

angry terns.

Some folks are always angry,
one-way streets,
extensive cigars,
boys vaping into a coma,
Hitler speaks on Youtube.

3.

Sea makes me talk,
Confess.

*Sometimes I feel
like a motherless child*

they sing,
the little kid with her daddy
down the aisle.

The sea makes us tell the truth—
hence bitterness, chemicals, the salt.

13 September 2019

CUTTYHUNK

and here we are,
10 PM and a full moon over Gay Head
and the wind and pretty cool
and the house at peace
and most things where they should be
and the sea outside,
I hear its voice,
basso in the moonlit night.

13 September 2019

= = = = =

From afar a photo
from months ago
a pen still full of ink.
And the sea again!

See, the sea is a word
you can say
that says a whole sentence,
page of poetry, scripture,
like the other little
word *you*,
which is the last book of the Bible.

Going to the sea is always coming home.
To you.

14 September 2019

=====

**A thing is
what it makes me think.
That's what language means.**

14 September 2019

REplete

**Specify— a species
waiting in the apple tree,
the old one, with ever-young
Eve asleep beneath it
soft among ferns.
A kind of fruit
unknown to mankind
but utterly known.**

14 September 2019

= = = = =

**Sea says it all—
that's what I mean.**

**Life is long enough
to tell you this.**

14 Sepyember 2019

=====

**I remind myself
of the first things
two pieces of wood
nailed together
and everything came after.**

14 September 2019

= = = = =

When everything is over
it begins.
A soup can, a ____,
a pile of ashes,
a photograph of a girl in uniform.
You used to know these things
all by yourself,
you used to live here too.
But now— so much to remember!
And where *is* the other side?

14 September 2019

= = = = =

**In this old days
some things were better.
Records, for instance,
now music has only one side.**

14 September 2019

= = = = =

What does it want to say
now I am here?

It all changes in the night.
Tinieblas, coast of shadows.
I wake convinced
someone left something here,
something that speaks,
painful, dark, the end
of something.

Something forgotten.
Something rotten.

14 September 2019

= = = = =

**Why can't I hear the sea?
Where did the night go?**

**Rouse a writer
from belief—
all belief is false,
all knowing sacred.
The night is too quiet—
I think it's gone away
and left only its dark.**

14 September 2019

BERLIOZ

**I keep having *Les Troyens* in my head,
the dreamy way music lingers,
as if hearing had little to do with time
after music so powerfully controlled it,
shaped time itself in passing.**

`14 September 2019

= = = = =

Watching the never
crest pver the sea,
coming nearer

and we dare to lie down
like dogs or servants
at the foot of the sea

and do right to do so,
captives of a good idea
like all pious folk.

and that sound you hear
from the seashore roaring
is the meaningful silence of the sea

as over against the penury
of our sometime music
glorious as it is in us—

but silence has everything in it.

14 September 2019

= = = = =

So late over spun time
weaving some clouds
together from the hilltop
into the Bible, where ha,
ha, ha become words
and who knows what happens
then? Then is now
all over again. Sleep wants us.
we are the cheap call-girls
of its busy lust. Sleep you
it says, sleep you deep in me.
All of us fall for it—still,
we find a dollar or two
when we wake, stuck
into the back of our minds.

14 September 2019

= = = = =

Watching the never
crest pver the sea,
coming nearer

and we dare to lie down
like dogs or servants
at the foot of the sea

and do right to do so,
captives of a good idea
like all pious folk.

and that sound you hear
from the seashore roaring
is the meaningful silence of the sea

as over against the penury
of our sometime music
glorious as it is in us—
but silence has everything in it.

14 September 2019

= = = = =

So late over spun time
weaving some clouds
together from the hilltop
into the Bible, where ha,
ha, ha become words
and who knows what happens
then? Then is now
all over again. Sleep wants us.
we are the cheap call-girls
of its busy lust. Sleep you
it says, sleep you deep in me.
All of us fall for it—still,
we find a dollar or two
when we wake, stuck
into the back of our minds.

14 September 2019

= = = = =

Dispossessed and languorous
a subtle people
living on the edge

come back with a brave report
sinners singing in the chapel
glad in obloquy

brutish before breakfast
but one swims
candlelight in strong morning sunlight

the human soul
the sea
in silence,

15 September 2019

= = = = =

**Resilience
eternal speakeasy
the slammed door
but knock again
half-empty glass**

15 September 2019

= = = = =

Capable of again—
a lobster claw
to hold the thought
at bay—
 keep
intelligence at bay
he cried,
 give me to feel,
till I am
only what I feel.

2.
At first I pitied him
then I tried
to echo
his silly cry.
I felt a ____
and no more—
the ancient sin of walking down the street.

15 September 2019

= = = = =

Later
when I am living in the sea
I will teach thee
about houses,
these sealed-tight boxes
in which each
night you have nightmares
and wonder why.
*I will teach thee the window
and the wisdom of the door
but not yet, not now.*
When hope used to be a virtue
or at least a girls' name,
czars and scimitars and crusades
swept most of that away
but there is a little thread of it
still left dangling from the heart,
not hope in general but a hope,
one for each one of us,
a frontier we may someday
stumble over into smiling Switzerland.

15 September 2019

=====

Trying for what matters
a clown in toga,
priest in mufti
where shall I wander
and the beginning, where is that?

15 September 2019

= = = = =

Leg in trousers
hand in pocket
everything else
is far away—

send this to your parents
from summer camp
so they'll do all
the worrying and you
can walk by the lake
suddenly unafraid.

15 September 2019

= = = =

(les parapenteurs)

To fly
and not fall
or fall
into flying—

a tarot card
in your teeth,
darkness over the sea,
a verb comes later.

15 September 2019

THE INLAID SHELL

Gull dropped
it shattered in the stones.
Time passed,
I can't guess how many.
Charlotte found it
this noontime
(speaking of time)
and gave it to me
with an explanation
I didn't quite understand—
something (again)
about time, and what time
does to clam shells
broken open, lying
on the shore.

A tiny thing, size
of my little finger's nail,
white rimmed round
black, the 'inlay'
it brought to her mind

as if, as if an artisan
in Venice, say, laid
a coat of resin
on a silver shell
and pressed into it
with his burin
—or just his fingernail?—
the initials of his beloved
or just the customer

or even—so small, fine
needlepointed lines—
an image of the three Graces
lingering on a clifftop
waiting for some poor
traveler to inspire.

because beauty is all the muses
all at once, all together.
O you're always
envisioning the Graces,
Charlotte chides, or is she
praising? Always seeing
Graces on the hilltop,

sidewalk, path through the woods,
looking at her face
when she's sleeping,
her face resting on
the tender reaches
of her upper arm,
eyes closed so she does not
see me watching.

But she knows. The Graces
always know, always
are amused by our desires,
abstentions, timidities,
bold bull snorting gallop
making up for doubt by urgency,

they always know.
Back to the shell.
The gull. The over
that lies under,
the black almost yielding
oval inside the tiny shell,

what clam lived here

is too sad a question.
Gulls must eat.
And Lama Norlha said
Of course eating is itself
a sin, no way around it,
sin or die. And dying
is probably the worst sin.

Poor clam. Poor gull.
Poor human shore
pf glacial scarp and jettisons
from the never quiet sea.

but the shell is beautiful
the way things can be
and we so seldom are
(the Graces always are),
I wish I understood
her explanation when
she handed me the tiny thing,
maybe I should ask her.
Maybe I'm asking her now.

15 September 2019

= = = = =

I couldn't tell my heart
from a throb in the sky
helicopter pulsing over
the sound, the sound
of blood in the arteries
seeking out so urgently
the furthest Wests within,
ear on the pillow hears
inside and outside the same.
And who is my Heraclitus
to tell one from the other,
heart or motor, here or high?
The wise old man has climbed
up on his half-tame lion and gone.

15 September 2019

= = = = =

I used to think this little
street with its broken
pavement and sudden jolts
went everywhere. And now
I know it. Wheel or footstep,
only the speed is different,
soft tread or harsh bounce,
the journey's end's the same.

Eevery thing we think or do
is a city, and a city is just a tangle
of ten thousands roads
all going to the dame place,
tarnished rooftop, palace of the heart.

15 September 2019

= = = = =

To be somewhere
is to be out of history
sunlight on the wall
of some other city
but here you are
in the amazement of now.

*

It's not a love
story anymore
it is the climax
the completion
when the story
folds in around itself—
you know you're there
because you're asleep.

15 / 16 September 2019

= = = = =

**I wanted the continuous
lights twinkling on the bay
far away or were they stars
being born out of our waters,
mother fluid, leap to the sky?
Can it be that light
comes out of the earth
as the Sun appears to
any moment now?
I am too dark to know
let me be known!
let me be light!**

15 / 16 September 2019

= = = = =

Warm strong
sun

acropolis of light
structuring the city
we call waking up.

Empty hill, wide fields,
tradeless sea—
no one around
yet this a city is
not even clouds.

16 September 2019

=====

**Or: a city
is the weather's
state of mind.**

16 September 2019

=====

**A crow on our deck you heard
in early light, calling
and another, further, answering—
our friends! We must
be somehow home,
our friends come calling,
once there were no crows
on this island. Then a pair
a few years ago
over the sea-pools at the West End.
And yesterday you saw a flock of them,
nearer, nearer,
and now aloft,
descending, blessing
the roofbeam even.**

16 September 2019

= = = = =

Have I this writing written
or did the gull do that,
or the bird I never even heard,
the crow that woke you
worded its way into my dreams
I answer now?

 The epistemology
of poetry
 is very strange.

17 September 2019

= = = = =

So here one is wake
on the last day
for a while
in a place
that knows more than I do.
Or is it wrong
to call the sea a place
when it is everywhere,
even inside us.
all the water of us,
all the salt?

17 September 2019

= = = = =

Walking is easy,
standing is hard.
I ask a tree
to teach me how,
the lovely paulownia
alone in the graveyard
all these years,
shed tells me she will
if I teach her how
to stroll up the sea cliff
just past the aspens
at close of day
when no one's looking.
And she laughs at me
in her sly Russian way.

17 September 2019

ON THE FERRY, STILL AT THE DOCK

**It's now or never.
Or now and never,
the way the cloud
shaped itself into
Velazquez's Venus recumbent
and then dispersed
into form-seeking otherness.**

**17 September 2019
leaving Cuttyhunk**

TWO ON THE PIKE

Food court rest stop
built as basilica,
high dome
windows all around
the float the light,,
huge slow fan
hgere the Eye
of Heacen would be,
maybe is, endless
circling over
empty tables.

*

The sound of Sun
pouring in
along the light,
a good mother, she
tells us everywhere she goes.

17 September 2019

= = = = =

The homework begins,
home now from that school the sea,
my lessons still shaky
afterdreamless sleep,
I woke counting the alphabet,
starting from the beginning,
getting my story straight.

18 September 2019
Lindenwood

= = = = =

**Cloudless sky over Cedar Hill
now after three days of opulent,
operatic exuberance aloft.
clouds acting out all the sciences
for us, to marvel and not touch,
to see and believe.**

18 September 2019

TWO ON THE CLOUDS

Really, I must do
something about the clouds—
to honor them to bow
before their myriad
constrictions, instructions
for our own slow dance
down here, where each
of us thinks *I am all alone*.

We watch them grow,
take foshape, disperse.
reorganize again,
we study form
and formlessness,
resemblances and
absolutes. And then
they're gone. Sky
with no clouds.
No wonder people
used to say I'm feeling blue.

18 September 2019

= = = = =

(in our own cemetery by the sea)

Glass heart on gravestone
not broken yet.
The mourners move away.
The heart—purple
in tree light, sea wind—
lingers.

We leave what we love
with with those we love.
It is simple, simple as that.
A heart made out of glass
no bigger than a coin,
left on a polished stone.
It may still be there.

18 September 2019

= = = = =

Now that I think about it
the rock rolls away
the sky's the color of it though,
just like in Verdi's *Othello*—
but all music and no one.
No one dies, it says,
printed across the still
green leaves. Now
that I think about it
it's almost seven o'clock
on a grey morning in America—
why don't I think something else?

19 September 2019

= = = = =

**Cars and tragedies,
gift of the local,
no feeling
without a place.
Mist in the trees.**

19 September 2019

= = = = =

**Nobody names their kid
Othello or Macbeth—
even parents have some sense
sometimes. But why Tristan,
why Cassandra?
Born for tragedy, what
can a little Siegfried do?**

19 September 2019

= = = = =

**Mist in the trees
messages everywhere**

19 September 2019

== ==

Lacking affinities
with elsewhere he
stayed home.
But even a boulder
came here from somewhere,
so even in him
glacier-slow.
Some other place
was calling him
come home.
There is such danger
in listening to yourself
thinking. And memory
is the longest mile.

19 September 2019

= = = = =

Well, the went blue.
The bell sang.
The shape of the maiden voyage
curled over the horizon.
We were there.
No one had come before us.
Monkey on a palm tree maybe.
Coconut. Tension in the thigh.
Eating purple plums in France.
How can you sit so long in moonlight?

19 September 2019

= = = = =

Drawing the decisive line across the sky
you are the most
you is the most poignant word
always here always far away
divisive.

The far from me
that is closer to me than myself.

20 September 2019

= = = = =

**So something got said.
The pilgrim closed his eyes
and kept walking.
How dark the light is,
his morning thought,
no wonder I wander.**

20 September 2019

= = = = =

The taste is different
the sky is the same.
Empty the ink-pots
and start again.
(My students dislike religion
or are indifferent to it,
listen to music only in short bursts,
but still compose their poems
longhand, on paper,
or in little books they carry
with them everywhere.
Poems still come from the body,
a little, finger and fingertip,
flip of pages in the wind.)
Language is naturally pagan
because anything is possible.
A grammatical 'mistake' is pure heresy,
and soon the world follows it.
And right now the mist is full of trees.

20 September 2019

= = = = =

Statements
neither verse nor prose
trying to be now,
just now.
Read me
and forget me inside.

20 September 2019

= = = = =

Here I thought
I would be somewhere
but not so—
the sun understands these things
because she too
has come over the horizon
time and time again—

there is no place for worry
she says, or worry is a no-place thing
a perceptual mistake, a pothole
in the sleek avenue of human thought.

I thank thee, Lady, for thy clarity.

20 September 2019
Rhinebeck

= = = = =

**Then the pretty clouds came back
all crinoline and wifty,
thin shift of them across the western blue,**

**20 September 2019
Rhinebeck**

= = = = =

**Am I still talking?
am I still talking to you?**

**I want to see the images you make
when you close your eyes.
want to hear the stories
you tell yourself on the way to sleep
and even after,**

**whenever I think of you
I say Reveal, reveal!**

**because you are the other
and the other is all I need to know—**

**any self knows that,
knows it needs the broken mirror,
the pages of your gospel
half-illegible, washed away by tears.**

**20 September 2019
Rhinebeck**

= = = = =

for C

**When I saw you first
though it was autumn
all the gtreeen came back.**

**20 September 2019
Rhinebeck**

= = = = =

And then I went to the Upanishads,
 sought in their language
 the truth that comes before language—
 is there one? I found the stories,
 wisdom, enigmas, consolations,
 just like everyday, city streets,
 dusty fields, children's voices,
 Everest on the horizon, the cat asleep.

*Everything we ever learned,
 everything we knew or thought we knew
 we put in language—
 go find it there, and find us too,
 the donors, the demons, deities,
 dancers that made you.*

20 September 2019
 Rhinebeck

= = = = =

How far we are
from where we are.

It startles me
to see
ground beneath my feet—
perplexes me
that there I am
after all.

20 September 2019
Rhinebeck

= = = = =

In a world of measurements
we tell our fortunes
by the spaces in between,
even the gap between
a number and its real self,

say Seeven in a field all by itself,
bent over, studying the ground
from which it grew.

20 September 2019
Rhinebeck

= = = = =

Pale shy clouds
slipping across the lower sky
like the memory of a friend
not too far away.

20 September 2019
Rhinebeck

= = = = =

Of course I'm anxious
my wife is in the doctor's office
I'm waiting in the car
with all the otheir cars around me
most of them empty
like the sky.

20 September 2019
Rhinebeck

= = = = =

**When the book is full
you've told the truth.
The truth wears skirts
like Greek soldiers or ballerinas.
The truth has long hair,
a bald spot hidden,
or one full page is truth enough,
where you have filled all
the white spaces with what you think.
How can there be
more truth than that?**

21 September 2019

GRAMMAR LESSONS

Staring out the adjective
to see— far off,
unclear, trees between—
the longed-for noun.

*

I verb thee
and thou verbest back.
The story is complete.

*

Grasp a pronoun
by the waist, firmly,
and hope, hope—
the answer comes.

21 September 2019

TRANSCENDENCE

Music bothering the other room
everybody means so well—
I have to smile at what offends me,
the jiggledy non-committal
music of the low baroque—
it is important to remember
it was when the cat had his fiddle
that the cow jumped over the moon.

21 September 2019
End of Notebook 427

LEAVING CHILDHOOD

There must be a ball
that bounces
all the way to you,

pale pink rubber
spaldeen we called it.
We had no name for you.

22 September 2019
Start of Notebook 428

= = = = =

(Odd detailed dream— the Anglican Church has “unanimously” re-imposed the ban on women in the priesthood. No more women priests. And the few who have been ordained are not priests at all, but honorable Women Who Should be Depicted and Honored Till they pass away. I shuddered awake.)

22 September 2019

= = = = =

All we can do with a name
is give it to somebody else

And dreams are like that too,
you 'have' them
but they are not you.—

The French say
you make a dream,
easier than
to give it away.

22 September 2019

=====

**Assemble me, resemble me
but let me sleep a while longer
till the sun swath
reaches the old tree
then I'll tell you who we are.**

22 September 2019

= = = = =

**All these people
who think they have identities—
if they only knew!
No one is anybody else—
there is no noun for *you*.**

22 September 2019

SUNDAY

No sugar shall we
and then the swoon
of afternoon—
a ball rolling across the lawn
until it stops.

Geology is like eternity
isn't it, the cant
of hillside, the sheen
of rock. O yes. The sun
is our mother truly still.

22 September 2019

= = = = =

By health we hope
or habit.
Road signs
built into the ear.
Caution. Turnings. Intersections.
But this street
has no name yet.
The thing about music
you can't close your ears—
we are built
to hear the truth—
listen, it may come yet.

22 September 2019

= = = = =

Each image is a gateway,
the gate may be opened
and should be opened.
Maybe you should go
all the way in—
or just stand inside the door
breathing the new air,
looking around,
wondering, being afraid, being
as they say of two minds,
Surely, a gate changes the goer.

22 September 2019

=====

**Then say to the thing
you just did: Please
don't mean anything,
just this once,
be and be done with.**

22 September 2019

=====

**Why should one day be special—
aren't we born every day?
(and the answer came
as I looked outside:)
Wind in one tree
the others still.**

23 September 2019

= = = = =

**Conscientiously filling the alphabet
with words—
always more to be made.
And not just by drug companies
greedy for trade-marks.
We all need them, borrow
from Turkish or Welsh,
till the page is filled neatly
with words you don't understand
or nobody does— then, then
you will have done. The word-work
summons! The alphabet is calling you!**

23 September 2019

=====

One word at a time
and wait. Waiting
is good for the vocabulary.
Tile-mongering in the Strand—
who knew? A strip
of porcelain says I-love-you.

23 September 2019

THE ADVICE

**Do a little bit of work
for Christ's sake
before you wake.**

23 September 2019

MERRY-GO-ROUND

By noon today
Uranus will have finished
his work with me,
his day done.
What will I do while he turns round
and comes again?
Astrology a carousel,
the horses high and low,
the Sun a brass ring?
No, the sun is the star Calliope
that makes the whole circus run.

24 September 2019

= = = = =

Slowly hair grows back
trees fade down,
the sky cools.

Why do we suppose
we really know anything?
It changes and we sleep.

24 September 2019

= = = = =

**Unaccountably glad,
another day
to say the truth!**

24 September 2019

= = = = =

Going into the mountains
to hunt for there.
People do that—
they use up where they are
until no more here is left.
Then the car comes out,
camera, camping gear, compass,
star map, keg of beer.
Why is it always hiding up there,
so far away, so high to climb?
No wonder I fell in love with the sea.

24 September 2019

=====

The car gets bigger
as it comes down the road
until it's so big
it's only car and no road.
Then the car has to stop—
it has chosen being over going—
or so it thought.
But there is no being but to go.
And now the car is just a ;ifeless thing.

24 September 2019

= = = = =

**I want to hear the hum in your head
touch you where you touch yourself
wear the skin that you put on
when you wake from the long sleep
of being anybody else.**

25 September 2019

**54 DEGREES FAHRENHEITAT 42 DEGREES
NORTH LATITUDE**

**There should be a poem
—ode or hymn or threnody or rant—
for every degree Fahrenheit
at every degree of latitude.
What else do we have to celebrate
left silent [?] by our sciences and poetry?**

**So here goes:
the window shines,
the sun is open,
if it were 20 higher
we'd still be OK.
20 lower and we'd shiver.
So we're OK.
But that's just us,
the blathering bores of the planet,
people, always on about ourselves,
measuring everything
by what it does for us.
To us.**

What about
the depth [?] in itself
and what it does for roses
of Sharon or otherwise,
trout streams, eagles
scouring the topography for food?
What is this precise, cool, lovely, lucid,
thingless thing that whelms around us
so quiet and ___?
But before I can find an answer
or wake one up,
it's slipped away and in saunters 55 degrees.

25 September 2019

= = = = =

**As a meaning a wound
something twisyed round
the feeling of being—**

omnia signa sunt
all things are signs

**we bear the meanings
sometimes in the bone
and the skin speaks.**

25 / 26 September 2019

= = = = =

Welcome rubber band
holds music together
fingertip by fingertip
the human harp?

*Your thought too often runs
and ends at the body*
it said in the sky
when I dared to look up
seeking yet another skin—

it's always saying something
up there, but I answered
Where else is there to go?

*Turn round, it said,
close your eyes and see.*

25 / 26 September 2019

MYSTICAL

**Mystical as a carpenter
with claw-hammer in hand,
as a Styrofoam panel
aquawaking in your fingertips,
as a stopped clock.**

**Mystical as a door
off its hinges, lying flat
in a field, mystical
as The dirt beneath it,
memory of grass.**

25 / 26 September 2019

= = = = =

Even the silent things
have lots to say.
Stand on the pier and lisen—
it's not all gulls and winches,
winds and diesel throbbing.
There's something else.
something more. between
the sounds you hear:
every place on earth
has its own distinctive silence
whispering to you between.

25 / 26 September 2019

=====

1.

The last time it was night
and now the again
happens and the bird.
Things still sings summer
out there in the other.

2.

I lost my way I thought,
my animal asleep.
Render me righteous, I prayed,
or rigid, or make me a river
let me flow your way or away
through the pprincipled geology
of everything we know.

3.

Asking for it,
always a way,
sensuous confusions,
maidens like catamounts,
swains fluteless at bay.
But when I looked
up and around
I was the only leaf on the tree.

4.

Pretty sky
child of my eyes.
I willk look at the lady
long as she lets me.

26 September 2019

AS IN A SONATA

As in a sonata
the movements move
to different rhythms
different tunes
but somehow all
the themes torque
together to seem
one or be one. One
house with its rooms.
a view of the sky.

26 September 2019

LEAVE ALONE

Leave alone.
A lark let
sing high
a dove down
here. And you
when you have
spoken stay
still, it waits
inside you.

26 September 2019

= = = = =

**Let the think sink in
till the Chinese
character of the day
soaks its clarity
into the soft paper.**

**You are the paper.
They are the pen
out there, the many,
the many Wielders.
God knows who is the ink
that pools in you now.**

27 September 2019

= = = = =

Light in the cupboard
clean cups
hang from their hooks,
brass holding china,
everything small, near
as a breeze
in the kitchen window.
The mugs mass below
upside down.
Spiritual hygiene.
Smile, close the door,
let it be dark,
come away.

27 September 2019

= = = = =

**A little thing you do
with your fingers
called music.**

27 September 2019

= = = = =

Ocelot
is called that for his spots—
ocelli, like eyes
all over his trim fur.
Why am I called human?
Have I the earth in me,
humus, the ground
we walk on?
I want to fly!

27 September 2019

= = = = =

1.

Not more
or some do?
Delicate peony
in rain
sheltering ants.

2.

Car by,
sound fade.
What lasts
lingers.
Speak in circles
never end.

3.

In peaceful clarity
dream of a bone.
Night has heaven
hints to show.

4.

You too
miraculous,
two.

5.

The ocean
is what is left
and we are
what's left of it.
O tuneful
chemistry.

6.

My humidity
loves us both—
is that enough
music?

7.

Why can't they sleep
and still be me?

8.

In school we learned
to doubt
what we are told.
Then they let us
go free
to find
what we believe.

9.

Only the numbers
seemed to make sense.
Always there
if seldom right.

10.

A triangle
left in the sky
by dark bird
passing.

11.

But who is the light?

12.

Walked into the web
at midnight
a strand of it
strayed,
poor spider's work undone.

13.

Time is there
for more.

14.

Before dawn
truth comes out,
tests the air,
shapes the day.
Wake and watch!

15.

Things I say I said.
So you.
Always you.

16.

I mean what you hear
gives meaning
to what is said.
Giving by taking
in.

17.

And so faith
begins anew,
no altars
no commandments,
only you.

27 / 28 September 2019

= = = = =

**A window needs a lot of looking out.
The fox crossing the road needs to be seen.
So many eyes to see with!
I celebrate the Mass of Seeing Things,
come pray with me
for the blind and for the given light.**

27 September 2019

= = = = =

**We are almost where we are
already not soon enough.
Fresh breeze in the window
coaxing us along.
Spirit is breath.**

27 / 28 September 2019

=====

**We can't say:
The sun lights up the world.
We can say:
We see better when the sun has risen.
Have we even yet begun to think?**

27 / 28 September 2019

= = = = =

Elegant opposites
heron on a rock.
(I thought of you
so tender and so firm.)
Loving the stream
that passes it by,
always ready though
to fly away.

28 September 2019

=====

What happens in the dark?

A flower grows.

Nothing else.

We happen in light.

28 September 2019

= = = = =

**An English dream.
Girl decoders
spooking Nazi messages
eighty years ago
birds at my window
snowy rooftops
Gloucestershire.**

28 September 2019

SOME PRACTICES OF FINNLAND'S SONS

Doubting but determined
a sort of lost dream
dragged through the day.
Irritable was I in dream
a-cause I couldn't find
the door. I mean the book.,
the book's the only
door I know. And so.

2.

Fabulous everywhere—
bell towers orgulous and loud,
boulevards with pretty couples
strolling nand in hand,
parasols and beggarmen,
preachers on apple crates
but no book anywhere. I need.
That is how you know
it's me. I need.

3.

Or books there were
but only wrong ones,
wrong because they did not
speak the words she needed.
Yes, she needed too.,
I don't know who she was
or is but only that she needed
a book I own but could not find.
The allegory is obvious.
The heart cant find the mind.

4.

Now and then the world
plays hard to get.
We are adolescents still,
this earth and people,
finding our way, or not,
or sitting at the edge
like Kierkegaard or else
whispering in each
other's ears as we dance.

5.

Dithering mostly,
unique poetics
pf the hard-of-hearing.
her harp my tantrum,
but who was she?
It doesn't matter a bit
the song keeps saying.

6.

We kept looking for the book
but who were we? Ah,
that would be telling
and I was never told. Just look
look lookm find the blessèd book
and hop for the nest. *Dormir !*
the poet cried on the wooden hill
to Bedfordshire we used to say,
where hret-great-grandfather John
held the book in his hand
and brushed the Greek clean
with English breath.

7.

How does one know
the things one knows?
Have you ever had the feeling
of a cobweb on your face?
You walked through the wrong door
came outside at the wrong time,
you wrecked something small
a small thing made and now
you pay the price. And have you
paid the price for where you are,
paying the tuition for the afterlife?
We Irish make a specialty of that.

8.

One island's as good as another
they say and how wrong they are!
True, the sea scours them all
but the secret rock within
hums heaven hymns on some
but mutes in others. Follow
the birds – they know all too well
the coasts that are quietest.

9.

Write backwards like the Talmud tells
so ordinary devils can't decipher.
And later even I can't find the book—
I goit irritable, I whined,
I shoved other books arund
in search of that elusive text.
Elusive. Elysian. Atlantean. Gone.
I just wanted to lend it to a friend.
But friends are dangerous in dreams.

10.

Whenevr you read a book
it leaves a wake behind.
Sometimes fgrom the island shore
ypu can see it still
slow-dispersing on bay or channel.
When it's gone the bok
is all in you now, trapped
in your imagination, eber changing,
and where the deuce is it now?
(Double-talk is a Gaelic guile.)

11.

English or Irish
am I my DNA?
Is today still
yesterday?

12,

I wait by the river
that flows both ways,
watch the light watering the trees.
The woods are good for breathing,
wood itself a kind of breath
long held in rapture.

13.

I try. I breathe
the sky in,
I pry a vowel
out of a word,
the shell of its consonants
clink-clatters to the floor.

**Now I dare
to breathe
the vowel in—
sweet sin!**

**14.
Now everything sleeps
with its oppsite in its arms.**

29 September 2019

== ==

Breathe me, window!
Wait for me, door.
Love me, dear world—
in language I am
and am a frightened child.

29 September 2019

= = = = =

I dreamed a bottle of blue ink,
then poured the last violet
into the black—the color
makes the darkness flow.
But something's lost—
the purity. And something's
found: the sad beauty
of the end of things, the empty
bottle still wet with what it was.

29 September 2019

= = = = =

Everything dreams me ahead.
But where is the mountain going?
And where do ladders
climb to in the dark?
Do you have words? Write,
write the dawn down
all the way up if it lets you.
Suddenly the sunray
tips the top of the tallest tulip tree—
Yes, it sats, yes, yes, yes.

29 September 2019

ANSWER ME KINDLY

**if you will,
the light is going
to happen soon
and then where
will all the children be
roots in swamp water
eyes in the trees
and books in their hands!**

**Because the morning
is naked like that,
and all the things we mean,
all the things we spent
our whole lives meaning,
meaning and wanting,
all of them are here,
walking around
picking shadows off the ground
trying to whistle a tune
we gave them we barely remember.**

30 September 2019

= = = = =

**Business is the last frontier
and we are outlaws on it,
reluctant to invest or insure,
working for a living just like
our immigrant ancestors
every one of them a poet,
painter, sculptor, musician
or priestess of aphrodite.
Our checks come from tired
businessmen
but we really work for the sky.**

30 September 2019

= = = = =

If you want to learn
how to pronounce Irish
listen to a frog on a cold spring night,
listen to a birch tree
creaking in the wind,
imitate a salmon splashing
back into a stream, try
to whistle hoarse as a blackbird,
snuffle like a priest
snuffling in a hurry through Mass,
shout out the window
at passing cars,
lick your paws and try again.

30 September 2019

= = = = =

The orchestra remembers me
I used to play the bombardon
they call it tuba here
so I don't know the sound I
made I miss it still.
Can there be a music
that fits me in, a song
sustains me and doesn't bore you?
I obsess about the loss of melody
when all I should do is sing to you.

30 September 2019

= = = = =

Trace elements
scarce in the day
the oil of light
easing the streets.

For I was lowland once
on Gerritsen,
walked the great pipe
out into the sea.

Now only a taste
of salt lingers in me
but it makes me,
makes me be me.

30 September 2019

= = = = =

That one we saw
walking on the sky—
do we pray to her
or just listen?

I stood in the grotto
and still gasp for breath,
a child amazed
by the beautiful silence.

30 September 2019

LA MÉTHODE

**Write what you don't know—
that is the only way
to tell the whole truth.
The language knows.**

30 September 2019